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MAY 20 1961

WATERTOWN, N.Y.
TIMES

E. 43,728

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JOINT CHIEFS UNDER FIRE

The Central Intelligence agency, the president, the Cuban invasion leaders, the communications arrangements, the strategy, the tactics, and the morality of the idea have all been blamed or questioned in the aftermath of the pathetic attempt to overthrow the Castro regime. Now it is the turn of the joint chiefs of staff. Probably because frustration over the episode has only been aggravated by the passage of time, they have now really caught it in the neck from the congressional critics.

A senator who heard the secret testimony of Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, chairman of the joint chiefs, given Friday in Washington to the Latin American affairs subcommittee of the Senate foreign relations committee, emerged in high dudgeon and called for the removal of all the joint chiefs. Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee, who feels this way about the way the Cuban debacle was produced, is not at all joined in this view by others who heard the same testimony from General Lemnitzer, but his reaction is the kind that is stirring up the biggest storm yet over this sad chapter. But while the others who heard the testimony did not all immediately ask for everybody's head on a platter, there was great surprise and dismay at the review of the situation provided by General Lemnitzer.

And all this rumpus about secret testimony provides the American public, paying the \$40,000,000,000-plus defense bill for the "mightiest power on earth," with no additional light on the subject.

It is certainly high time that some semblance of an explanation was given, but in the meantime an explanation can be attempted at where the joint chiefs of staff stand in the American defense system. First of all, under General Lemnitzer, as chairman, are Gen. Thomas D. White of the air force, Adm. Arleigh A. Burke of the navy, and Gen. George Decker of the army. Gen. David M. Shoup, of the

marine corps sits with the chiefs, although he is not a member, to participate in the discussion of marine corps affairs. General Lemnitzer is of the army and was its former chief of staff, but the chairman is cast outside his role of representing a particular service when he is elevated to the chairmanship.

This point about the membership's representation of particular services is the center of debate about the role of the joint chiefs of staff, as well as about its effectiveness. It is debated heatedly at those times when inter-service rivalries go beyond the degree of healthy competition and are seen to interfere with the overall efficiency and economy of the gigantic defense establishment.

The joint chiefs of staff were formally created out of the National Security act of 1947 and its amendments of 1949, although the idea had its roots in the overall staff arrangements developed during World War II. They were originally described as the principal military advisers to the president, the National Security council, and the secretary of defense. They are to prepare strategic plans and provide for the strategic direction of the military forces; prepare joint logistic plans and assign to the military services logistic responsibilities in accordance with such plans; establish unified commands in strategic areas; review major material and personnel requirements of the military forces in accordance with strategic and logistic plans; formulate policies for the joint training of the military forces; formulate policies for coordinating the military education of members of the military forces; and provide U.S. representation on the U.N. military staff committee.

A large order, it appears. The chairman is appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate and while holding such office takes precedence over all other officers of the armed services. Presiding officer, he provides the meeting agendas and tells the secretary of defense and the president when the chiefs cannot agree.

The latter duty is mentioned because it is one that has befallen the chairman many times since the joint chiefs were first organized. Disagreement has resulted from the aforementioned fact that the separate members, excluding the chairman, have so often felt the need to represent their service's specific interest in defense plans rather than to cast themselves as judges of the best overall defense policy. President Eisenhower wrestled with the problem intermittently during his two terms. Eventually he turned in the direction of making the joint chiefs more authoritative, as representing the president and defense secretary, in the carrying out of defense policies, than advisory in the sense of their representing points of view.